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Oceans and the law of the sea

Note verbale dated 2 January 2013 from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to submit the enclosed document (see annex). Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/37 B of 4 April 2011, a workshop was held in Miami, United States of America, from 13 to 15 November, under the auspices of the United Nations, in support of the first phase of the first assessment cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (the "workshop"). The attached summary of the workshop, also prepared under United Nations auspices, is a useful synopsis, and the United States therefore requests that the present letter and the annex thereto be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 75.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 2 January 2013 from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Final report of the fourth workshop held under the auspices of the United Nations in support of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects

Miami, United States of America, 13-15 November 2012

I. Report overview

1. The present report focuses on critical information for the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, and the Group of Experts as they develop the Wider Caribbean region component of the first global integrated marine assessment (hereafter referred to as the world ocean assessment). It specifically highlights workshop findings related to Wider Caribbean region information gaps, capacity needs for marine assessments in the region, suggestions for development of the world ocean assessment, and next steps in the production of the assessment. These insights were synthesized from the presentations, breakout group discussions and concluding session of the workshop. The annexes to the report provide other details of the workshop and its outcomes, including the agenda, list of participants, summaries of the presentations, and breakout group results.[1] The breakout group results provide an inventory of environmental and socioeconomic marine assessments, including specific sources of information and experts relevant to both the Wider Caribbean region and parts III-VI of the world ocean assessment outline.

II. Background: objectives, history and participants

2. Following the recommendations made at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process in June 2011, and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/231 of 24 December 2011, the workshop was held for the Wider Caribbean region from 13 to 15 November 2012 in Miami, United States of America, under the auspices of the United Nations in support of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.

3. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Enhance dialogue between marine experts within Governments, international government organizations and regional initiatives
- Develop an inventory of environmental and socioeconomic marine assessments

[1] All annexes to the present report can be found on the workshop website (http://www.woawcr.org) and on the website of the Regular Process secretariat (http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/global_reporting.htm).

- Consider the linkages among assessments, including driving factors and the state of the marine environment
- Identify marine assessment capacity-building needs and consider means to address those needs.

4. The Government of the United States of America, with the technical and financial support of the United Nations Environment Programme, the secretariat for the Cartagena Convention and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE), hosted the workshop.

5. The workshop was facilitated by Co-Chairs Bonnie Ponwith (United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)) and Lorna Inniss (Joint Coordinator of the Group of Experts). Participants (see annex A) included experts from 25 countries within the Wider Caribbean region, experts from countries outside the region, many local, regional and international organizations, and five members of the Group of Experts: Patricio Bernal (Chile), Sean Green (Jamaica), Lorna Inniss (Barbados), Enrique Marschoff (Argentina), Andrew Rosenberg (United States of America) and Renison Ruwa (Kenya).

III. Conduct of the workshop

6. The workshop was conducted in accordance with the agenda (see annex B).

7. A series of presentations were provided on the first day to explain the world ocean assessment and to set the context of its Wider Caribbean region component. Summaries of the presentations and the ensuing discussions are provided in annex C.

8. The second day was devoted to the breakout groups in which participants self-selected into four groups in line with the four major sections of the world ocean assessment: biophysical (part III, chaps. 4-7); food security and food safety (part IV, chaps. 10-15); socioeconomics (part III, chaps. 3 and 8, and part V, chaps. 17-30); and marine biological diversity (part VI, chaps. 34-43). The breakout groups were conducted according to the guidance developed to ensure comparable outcomes that reflected the objectives of the workshop (see annex D).

9. During the third day, the breakout groups presented the highlights of their discussions (these highlights and the specific details of the breakout group discussions are included in annexes E-H). Following these presentations, Co-Chair Lorna Inniss provided a recap of the means by which the participants should engage further in the conduct of the world ocean assessment and highlighted the achievements of the workshop. Ambassador Donatus Keith St. Aimee (Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process) closed the workshop. Participants were asked to fill out an evaluation of the workshop (see annex I) to inform the lessons learned document produced as a courtesy for future workshop hosts (see annex J).

IV. Wider Caribbean region information gaps

10. Numerous information gaps were identified throughout the presentations and discussions, breakout groups and closing discussion, including the following:

- Standardized protocols and methods across the region for comparability. The Group on Earth Observations was recommended as a source of insight into comparable approaches and methods
- Improved national and regional data analyses abilities. Too often, the limitation is not research, but the capacity to store and analyse existing data. There is a wealth of raw data in the region, as well as outside the region to be repatriated, awaiting analysis
- Greater exchange and sharing of information to support regional policymaking. Protocols need to be established for information-sharing. The articles in the Cartagena Convention provide relevant guidance
- Integration of research and collaboration among different areas of the region. There is a particular need for regional-level socioeconomic syntheses, since socioeconomic studies are often site-specific
- A dynamic, living atlas of the Wider Caribbean region marine environment. Such an atlas could provide a foundation for an international Wider Caribbean region network to share ideas, data, tools, strategies and deliverables to improve utilization of Wider Caribbean region data for research and operational applications. The challenge is not the production of individual data products, but the generation of harmonized data sets to maximize the impact and benefit for scientific analyses and syntheses. The Global Ocean Observing System Regional Alliance for the IOCARIBE region (IOCARIBE-GOOS) is a potential mechanism for such an atlas. The Caribbean Marine Atlas project of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission represents a first step in this process
- Reliable, consistent monitoring programmes that continue beyond the initial assessments
- Ensuring increased access to, and affordability of, the most advanced technology and tools while also ensuring cost-effectiveness. It is not uncommon for huge investments to go into high-tech equipment that is too expensive to maintain when a more economical version would have sufficed
- Improved access to scientific literature
- Science-to-policy approaches to ensure that research informs decision-making. Research needs to be planned and designed to meet management needs by engaging decision makers in design as well as implementation. The critical scientific needs of the region need to be articulated
- Improved science communication and integration. There is a great deal of data and information; however, they are not always readily available or synthesized in a usable form. An important amount of information is not published (grey literature) or exists only as internal reports of the public or private sector. Scientific results need to be synthesized and culled to identify key coherent messages relevant to management and policy agendas

- Scientific results need to be translated from "academic-speak", communicated in relevant, useful, understandable and accessible forms and then communicated in the appropriate forums and along the relevant policy timelines. Communication strategies need to be appropriate to the knowledge demands of varying publics, which range from political to civil society organizations and communities

- A collective regional institution or institutional arrangements to facilitate a solid science foundation to the decision-making processes at the regional and national levels. This requires an institution capable of providing regular information on the biophysical and socioeconomic conditions in the Wider Caribbean region. As noted above with regard to the atlas concept, initiatives such as IOCARIBE-GOOS are intended to provide such regular information services

- Awareness efforts that promote the benefits that people receive from the oceans to engender stewardship. Too often, scientists, policymakers and conservationists highlight the negative aspects of the marine environment (e.g., hurricanes and shoreline erosion)

- Political will and leadership at all levels

- Improved inter-agency cooperation (e.g., establish memoranda of understanding and data-sharing protocols) both within and between countries

- More engaged non-traditional stakeholders (i.e., the private sector, schools and community groups) and simplified reporting frameworks (e.g., agree on information-sharing protocols to support decision-making)

- Greater national inputs to reports on the state of the Cartagena Convention (notably the reporting templates of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities)

- Improved documentation of institutional knowledge

- More financing for monitoring and assessments.

11. On the basis of the presentations and discussions, the following topics were identified as needing further study in the Wider Caribbean region:

- Ecosystem service and socioeconomic assessments, including studies of economic, social, linguistic and cultural diversity in the region

- Offshore and deep-sea studies

- Analyses of impacts of watershed activities on marine resources

- Studies in less-developed countries.

12. The breakout group tables (see annexes E-H) define information gaps for each chapter of the world ocean assessment outline.

V. Capacity needs for marine assessments in the Wider Caribbean region

13. Drawing on the presentations, discussions and breakout group discussions, participants made the following observations regarding capacity needs and measures to address those needs for the Wider Caribbean region:

- Previous or ongoing regional marine assessments, specifically the Caribbean Coastal Marine Productivity Programme, the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change project and the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project, were highlighted as success cases for capacity-building
- In some disciplines, such as physical oceanography and remote sensing of the ocean environment, capacity is highly aggregated in a few institutions. In other disciplines, such as social sciences, it is highly dispersed
- Access to research vessels (e.g., NOAA ships) and ships of opportunity (e.g., those used in relation to the Living Oceans Foundation) offer opportunities and synergies on a wider scale with technological advances for enhanced marine assessments
- There is often an abundance of data, including those collected by ships of opportunity; the limitation, then, is in the capacity to manage the data, including how to organize, store, synthesize and analyse them. Participants discussed the need for nationals to study at institutions where data are already being used and then to bring home the expertise
- Building collaboration among scientists, resource managers and other stakeholders is central to capacity-building, especially as it includes building a willingness to share and communicate. With this need in mind, networks of practitioners, experts, institutions and countries need to be established and fostered and regional programmes promoted
- There is a fundamental need to increase capacity to integrate the key insights of existing research into policy and management agendas
- There is a critical need to retain the knowledge that is invested in training employees and management leadership. This requires fiscal incentives to retain individuals in positions. The constant cycle of promotion at all levels results in an export of knowledge out of the field. Often, the bulk of expert individuals will be lost from policy and management to narrow academic research fields.

VI. Suggestions for development of the world ocean assessment

14. During the presentations and discussions, the participants noted that the world ocean assessment might be a first step in a renewed effort to mobilize institutions and experts of the region to enhance cooperative work and to find synergies. The world ocean assessment also represents an opportunity to bring experts together as they contribute to the working papers on the different topics. This initiative can, therefore, help to produce the needed information to address the common problems due to the increased use of the ocean and its resources, and to prepare the Wider Caribbean region to adapt to the impact of global climate change.

15. Participants identified the following topics, which need to be better reflected in the world ocean assessment outline:

- Ocean governance: highlighting the state of governance is fundamental to ensuring that the world ocean assessment leads to policy change
- Ocean acidification
- Analysis of reference points
- Analysis of biological, social and economic impacts of alternative policies (e.g., cost of pollution in terms of use and non-use values)
- Plausible future scenarios
- Watersheds where land activities influence coastal environments
- Climate change
- Gender
- Poor and vulnerable communities.

16. The participants also made the following suggestions regarding the approach, structure and methods of the world ocean assessment:

- A comprehensive strategy is needed for communicating and disseminating results and influencing policy
- Engage Governments and other stakeholders throughout the drafting of the Wider Caribbean region component of the world ocean assessment to ensure that the analyses provide information that will be useful to decision makers. With that in mind, the analyses need to be upstream and demand-driven (country-driven) to ensure that there is ownership and buy-in of outputs and follow-up. Engagement will also foster buy-in and ultimately help to ensure that policymakers integrate the findings into regional and national policies
- Clarify what is unique about the world ocean assessment compared with other meta assessments and processes, past, present and future
- Clarify how the structure relates to drivers-pressures-state-impact-response
- Clarify to what extent the world ocean assessment will be quantitative
- Clarify how reference points/baselines will be calculated
- Be transparent regarding choice of methods, data sources and assumptions
- Consider that global and regional economic values will not have much impact and will be difficult to track for trends and, instead, consider calculating local values, which are useful for policy and management agendas.

VII. Next steps in the production of the world ocean assessment

17. The results of the workshop will be shared with the Group of Experts to inform the drafting of the Wider Caribbean region component of the world ocean assessment. The assessment timeline includes the following key steps:

- Further nominations by States to the Pool of Experts
- Approval of the guidance to contributors
- Preparation of working papers for each chapter (fall 2012-fall 2013)
- Preparation of draft chapters based on working papers (October 2013-March 2014)
- Production of the first draft of the first world ocean assessment (April-May 2014)
- Peer review and review process (June-August 2014)
- Final draft (September 2014)
- Submission to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process (December 2014)
- Publication (February 2015).

18. Workshop participants were aware that the process of holding the workshop would also inform the conduct of other workshops. The upcoming workshops are: the western Indian Ocean (Maputo, December 2012), the south-west Pacific (Brisbane, Australia, February 2013), the South Atlantic (city to be determined), and the northern Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (city to be determined). All countries will receive notice of all Regular Process workshops through invitations issued through their missions to the United Nations.

19. Participants were asked to send any additional sources of information and names of experts to Kareem Sabir (ksabir@coastal.gov.bb) for inclusion in the present report. Participants were also encouraged to join the Pool of Experts and, if selected by the Group of Experts, to engage in drafting the Wider Caribbean region component of the world ocean assessment.